Freshwater,P.E.
Undated (prob.early '40's

Dear Mr. Barrelman:

I am a constant listener to your program and I find it very entertaining and I wonder if I told you a little story about my grandfather would you be interested.

Well Sir, my grandfather Richard McGrath was an Irishman, he was born in Carrick on Suir Cty. Tipparary and came to this country on or about the year of 1812. His wife before he married her was a widow having been previously married to a Mr. Casey who died leaving her with daughters. Now in those days, times were not good in Ireland and my Grandfather, determined if at all possible to get to this country, had to work a stratagem. There was a war on at the time and you know the way of recruiting in those days was by the pressgang . Luckily for my grandfather he was a man of small stature, but my grandmother was a tall, stalwart woman and when she came to the quay to embark, the pressgang was there, and how to evade being seen was their problem, but my gransmother was equal to the occasion. What do you think she did Mr. Barrelman?? nothing less than covered him with her cloak and shall until the pressgang left the quay, and by this means they got safely on board their ship. In the mean time they left the two girls with their friends until they got settled in this country.

There was not much style about the old folks in these days as could be seen by the houses they constructed. My grandfather's house was a long low cabin fifty feet by sixteen with a chimney about 12 feet square at the base. This chimney had two flues on the kitchen side a fire place was built in it about 6 X 8 in this as set the dogirons as there was no stoves in these days you could stand in this fire place and look up and see the sun, moon and stars. A great iron bar was built in with the construction of the chimney from this long iron hooks hung down for hanging the pots and kettles on, this was also the way they used to do their baking burn dancen? the coals and put them on the cover of the pot. I will remember the dogirons, Mr. Barrelman, and have good reason for I have a mark on my face from a burn I got when I was 2 years old by falling on the dog irons. Also in the fireplace there was a small square hole for holding the tinder box, flint and steel no Eddy's matches in those days.

I do not know my grandmother's name before she married Mr. Casey but she was a relative of Bishop Fleming who came to this country some years later. They settled in Little Placentia or what is now Argentia. Times were not bright at that time, but by sheer hard work and energy they managed to get ahead of the times and started a supplying business. They supplied quite a number of people around Placentia Bay and their business flourished for several years. I was told that at one time my grandmother had a flour barrel full of silver dollars but they managed to spend it all as when I took down the old house in 1898 all I found in it was one halfpenny the date of which was 1773.

Afew years after they got settled in Little Placentia they sent for the two girls who came to this country at the ages of 15 and 17 . One of them married Thomas Connors and was the grandmother of Capt. Thomas Connors of the Coastal Service, the other married Mr. Edward Houlihan and is the grandmother of Mr. Edward Houlihan, now living at Jersey Side, Placentia and two granddaughters now living here in Freshwater.

As I said above, they done a good business for a while and amongst items sold was a goodly portion of rum and wine as the old ledger shows and it dates back to 1835. It would amuse you to read down the pages every second item entered in it is a pint or a noggin of rum or wine , but one could have a good drink in those days for much less than you can today as can be noted by the prices entered

in this ledger - 3pence a noggin 6 pence ½ pint one shilling a pint, etc. no small drinks in those days M.r Barrelman, nothing less than a noggin at a time. What a contrast from today, trying to get a bottle from the Controllers that will cost you from $3. to $5. and wait from 2 weeks to a month on many occasions before you get it when in those days all you had to was go down to old Kitty McGrath who always kept a punchion of rum and a punchion of wine on hand and have your noggin for 3 pence.

My grandparents had a family of five after settling in Little Placentia 3 boys and two girls. The boys names were John, Richard and Jim. John was my father and Richard was the grandfather of Rt. Rev. Wm. C. McGrath of China Missions, and Rev. R.T.McGrath of St.John's he was also the grandfather of Dr. James McGrath of St.John's.

I could give you some more information about my father and uncles in their early days and slso some very interesting information about about my father's property and its disposal but it may be to monotonous so I will leave it for your approval , in the meantime if you have wish to see the old Ledger I would be glad toforward it to you.

Wishing you every success in your Program

I am, yours very truly

/s/ James J. McGrath

The above is a copy of a copy of a letter writtin by my father James McGrath to the Barrelman, Mr. Joseph Smallwood, later Premier of Nf. The copy was written in pencil on the back of a "Ration Coupon request" probably during the war. My father was born 1873 and died in 1963. We have no written records, but our father told us this storey many times. He had great affection and respect for the Connors' and Houlihans' familes and told us many stories about them, all of which we have forgotten.

His grandfather died in 1868 five years before he was born.

His grandmother affectionately known as "Auld Kit" lived in Granny's cove in Little Placentia (later Argentia).DOD is not known.

Jim McGrath

Intro to James McGrath Letter by A. McGrath

Kevin:

As you can see I do not have very much information on the Connors family. I can only give you the beginning which I got from the letter my father wrote to Joey in the early forty's. It is the same story he related to us many times, andI am so sorry I did not record his stories, for now they are all forgotten. I believe the time he went to the Flemish Cap the year of the great fire in St.John's (1892?) was in the company of Joachim Connors. I really have forgotten. I do know there was a close relationship with the connors and Houlihans.

Catherine Casey who married Richard McGrath was previously married to a Casey. She had two daughters by that first marriage - their names could have been Catherine and Margaret - because these two names have come down through the generations

Edward Ginn who did the genealogy of the Houlihan family tried to get information from Carrick on Suir, but got very little. I think the McGrath's lived in Waterford, and maybe Mrs. Casey was from Carrick on Suir.

Catherine married a Casey (first marriage)
Two Daughters - Catherine - Married Edward Houlihan
? - Married ? Connors
Ann Tom

Caterine married Richard McGrath in Ireland, died in Nfld. (Second marriage)
Immigration: circa 1812?
Children: John
Richard (Became a member of the NF Govt in 1861)
James
Catherine
?

Seven children in all - two Casey's and 5 McGrath's

A copy of my father's letter is enclosed for information.

Ann McGrath